

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 NIC-01 SAJ-01 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01

IO-14 (ISO) R

DRAFTED BY EUR:DGOOTT:MBW

APPROVED BY EUR:DGOOTT

S/IL:TBOWIE (DRAFT)

EUR/EE:RHOUSTON (DRAFT)

EUR/EE:WSSHEPARD (DRAFT)

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R 101638Z JAN 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 005235

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: ELAB HU

SUBJECT: US-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS AND TRADE UNIONS

REF: BUDAPEST 037

1. IN RESPONSE AMB'S REQUEST FOR BACKGROUND MATERIAL FOR HIS UPCOMING MEETING WITH HUNGARIAN LABOR CHIEF GASPAR WHEN LATTER'S EXPRESSED INTEREST IN RESTORING HUNGARIAN AND OTHER EASTERN EUORPEAN LABOR CONTACTS WITH US LABOR IS EXPECTED TO BE DISCUSSED, DEPT AIR POUCHING COPY OF AFL-CIO CONVENTION RESOLUTION ADOPTED LAST OCTOBER STRONGLY REASSERTING AFL-CIO'S LONGSTANDING OPPOSITION TO FREE TRADE UNION EXCHANGES WITH LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN TOTALITARIAN SOCIETIES, AND A COPY OF A RECENT EXCHANGE BETWEEN GEORGE MEANY AND WEST GERMAN TRADE UNION LEADER OSKAR VETTER ON THIS GENERAL SUBJECT. THE RESOLUTION SPECIFICALLY MENTIONS HUNGARIAN WORKERS ALONG WITH SOVIET
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AND SPANISH AMONG OTHERS, WHO "NOW UNDER A TOTALITARIAN

YOKE" AND EXPLAINS RATIONALE FOR AFL-CIO'S OPPOSITION TO SUCH CONTACTS.

2. GASPAR IS, OF COURSE, CORRECT IN HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT MEANY DOES NOT REGARD EASTERN EUROPEAN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS AS REAL TRADE UNIONS. THE CONVENTION STATEMENT FOR EXAMPLE, EXPRESSES LONGING FOR THE DAY WHEN

WORKERS IN THOSE COUNTRIES "MAY BE ABLE TO ENJOY RIGHTS AND BENEFITS OF FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION, THE RIGHT TO STRIKE, BONA FIDE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING--GENUINE FREE TRADE UNIONISM." IN THE LIGHT OF THESE CRITERIA AND IN RECOGNITION OF GASPAR'S DUAL ROLE OF PARTY POLITBURO MEMBER AND TRADE UNION CHIEF "IMPOSED ON WORKERS," DEPT VERY MUCH DOUBTS THAT MEANY WILL BE INFLUENCED BY GASPAR'S CONTENTION THAT "THINGS WERE CHANGING" IN ANY FUNDAMENTAL SENSE.

3. *AFL-CIO IS LIKELY, MOREOVER, TO VIEW ANY SUCH APPROACH BY GASPAR IN THE CONTEXT OF RECENTLY STEPPED UP SOVIET AND BLOC EFFORT TO PROMOTE "UNITY" WITH WESTERN TRADE UNIONS IN DEALING WITH EUROPEAN AND WORLD POLITICAL PROBLEMS, AN EFFORT TO WHICH THE AFL-CIO LEADERSHIP IS VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED.

4. AN ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION THE AMB MAY WISH TO BEAR IN MIND IN HIS DISCUSSION WITH GASPAR IS THAT THE AFL-CIO, EVER CONSCIOUS OF ITS PREROGATIVES AS A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION, IS SENSITIVE TO APPEARANCE OF USG INTERVENTION IN WHAT IT REGARDS TO BE THE PRIVATE DOMAIN OF ITS OWN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH OTHER TRADE UNION BODIES. THE FUNDAMENTAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE INDEPENDENCE FROM GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF US TRADE UNIONS ON THE ONE HAND AND THE STATUS OF UNIONS IN COMMUNIST SOCIETIES AS INSTRUMENTS OF THEIR PARTIES AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE OTHER, IS ONE ON WHICH AFL-CIO PLACES GREAT STRESS, BUT WHICH SOVIET AND BLOC LABOR OFFICIALS USUALLY PREFER TO OBFUSCATE. BECAUSE OF THIS, AMB MAY WISH TO SUGGEST TO GASPAR THAT IF HE INDEED WISHES TO INITIATE AN APPROACH TO MEANY HE MIGHT BEST DO SO DIRECTLY RATHER THAN THROUGH US GOVERNMENT

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CHANNELS. MENTION OF THIS ALTERNATIVE WOULD PROVIDE A TIMELY REMINDER TO GASPAR THAT DECISIONS ON ITS INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS TRULY REST WITH THE AFL-CIO ITSELF. IN ANY CASE, GASPAR SHOULD HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE APPROACH OPENING THE DOOR TO A DIALOGUE WITH THE AFL-CIO.

5. DEPT NOTES WITH INTEREST THE EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT THAT THE HUNGARIAN TRADE UNION APPARATUS IS IN FACT A DIS-

TINGUISHABLE FORCE FROM THE PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT AND
WOULD WELCOME RECEIVING CONTINUING INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THIS JUDGMENT WHICH IT MIGHT USEFULLY SHARE, AS APPROPRIATE, WITH THE US LABOR MOVEMENT AND

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES. IN THIS REGARD, WE WILL BE INTERESTED IN THE GENERAL "VIEW FROM THE TOP" THAT KADAR'S BROTHER-IN-LAW MAY PROVIDE, AND WELCOME YOUR INITIATIVE IN OPENING A GENERAL DIALOGUE WITH THIS KEY GOH FIGURE. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, LABOR UNIONS, MEETINGS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE005235
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DGOOTT:MBW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740150/aaaabveo.tel
Line Count: 127
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BUDAPEST 037
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 MAY 2002 by rowelle0>; APPROVED <20 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS AND TRADE UNIONS
TAGS: ELAB, HU, AFL-CIO, (GASPAR)
To: BUDAPEST
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005